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ABSTRACT

This publication describes some of the issues and problems dealt with by Involvement of Mexican-Americans in Gainful Endeavors (IMAGE), a national, non-profit organization aimed at improving the social and economic conditions of Mexican-Americans. One of the main sources of concern for this group is the high dropout rate of Mexican-American youths. In response to this, the IMAGE Yearn to Learn Centers have been developed throughout the Southwest to provide youths with counseling, tutoring, and other supportive services to motivate students to return to or stay in school. This report focuses on the needs of Mexican-American youth and the services provided by the IMAGE Yearn to Learn Centers. (BWP)

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IMAGE

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Foreward

Involvement of Mexican-Americans in Gainful Endeavors, better known as IMAGE, is a chartered, non-profit national organization which was established in November 1968 to improve the social, economic and educational status of the Mexican-American. With its headquarters in San Antonio, Texas, it presently serves the Southwestern United States by establishing IMAGE chapters in communities where there is a need.

From its inception, IMAGE recognized that one of the primary factors which keeps the Mexican-American from improving his social and economic conditions has been the exceptionally high incidence of Mexican-American youth who do not graduate from high school. At the point of his "dropping out" he closes the door to the larger and richer spheres of personal and social experiences. He becomes relegated to a lower status which includes working at low-level jobs paying lower wages and susceptible to layoffs—he is forced to be content or discontent with his relatively poor situation. This continues to perpetuate the problems of an unskilled, uneducated people living in a business and technologically oriented country.

It is the opinion of IMAGE Inc., that a special need exists for a practical, appropriate approach to rectify the drop-out situation. To this end, IMAGE developed the "Yearn to Learn" concept and adapted it to programmatic use in each of its chapters throughout the Southwest.

The long-range potential of this program is based on motivating youth, through daily personal contact with professional and volunteer Yearn to Learn Center personnel, to stay in school or go back to school, to receive his education, to plan his future and to help up-grade the image and economic situation of the Mexican-American.

As part of the continued motivation process, many young people receive personal counseling, encouragement and motivation, tutoring or help with difficult subjects, and money or part-time job assistance.

The IMAGE Yearn to Learn Center provides those daily personal contacts, that constant personal motivation, the tutoring service and the job assistance program to the juvenile delinquent and pre-delinquent. In the future, this program should affect the economic and social image of Mexican-Americans in every community where there is an IMAGE Yearn to Learn Center.

This report is a series of relatively brief objective informative statements which describe the complex nature of the problem and the solutions forwarded by IMAGE. This analysis is intended to be utilized to focus attention on the essentials of the problem, IMAGE's approach toward alleviating the conditions of poverty and lack of motivation among the Mexican-American and to highlight the success of the program, and as an example of what can be done when people decide to better their lot.

If this presentation serves to clarify the issue of the disadvantaged status of the Mexican-American youth, if it serves to motivate others to do something to help these youth, then one of the objectives of IMAGE will have been served.

JAMES A. HART
San Antonio, Texas

June 6, 1973

Contents

Foreward iii

The Needs of Mexican-American Youth 1

Image's Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) 4

Image's Concern for Negative Self-Concepts Among Mexican-American Youth 8

Image's Tutoring Program 11

Image's Career Day Conferences 12

Background on Image, Inc. 14
- The Problems of Mexican-American High School Dropouts . 14

The Yearn to Learn Concept 16

The Image Organization 18

The Need for a Yearn to Learn Concept 19
- The "Yearn to Learn" Concept is a Comprehensive Program . 20
- The Program Produces Results 20
- The Program is a Sound Investment 21

Image Today 22
- Alice 22
- Harlingen 23
- Mission 24

Summary 26

Acknowledgements 28

The Needs of Mexican-American Youth

In San Antonio, Texas, somebody told Joe Garcia that there were people over on Ruiz Street who would help him get a job.

Joe didn't believe it. He couldn't remember that anybody, in all his nineteen years, had helped him get anything. The nearest he could remember to having good meals every day was the time he'd been in jail.

But Joe went over to look. He saw a medium-sized frame building that used to be a house. He had passed by it many times. He didn't like it.

So now he walked around the block. In fact, he walked around the block five times. Finally he clenched his fists and went inside. He wouldn't chicken.

When Joe Garcia went through those double doors, something new happened in his young life.

IMAGE's Youth Entrepreneurship Program has helped people like Joe Garcia to acquire a meaningful outlook on life by giving them an opportunity to learn a skill and receive a salary for their work. IMAGE, Inc., believes that,

> *"There is nothing more meaningful to deprived youth than honest economic success previously considered unattainable."*

Juan Flores is a young Mexican-American dropout who has migrated with his family to Lubbock, Texas, to pick cotton. Since it was the end of the week, Juan has gone with his mother and his baby brother into town to buy the weekly groceries. For some time now, Juan has been acutely aware that he and his family have been treated differently from the other families in the predominantly white Anglo community, especially the time he tried to attend classes in the community school. But he never realized the extent of the discrimination until today. As they entered the town's small grocery store, another family came out, one of the Anglo families of the town, the father, the mother with a small baby in her arms, and another boy about the same age as Juan. As they passed each other, the young Anglo boy looked up at his mother, pointing to Juan's baby brother in Juan's mother's arms. "Look, mother," he said, "a baby cotton picker."

Many young Mexican-Americans suffer the trauma of discrimination at an early age. IMAGE's primary objective from its inception has been

to eradicate the negative self-concepts fostered by many in the Mexican-American community. Through its Yearn to Learn concept, IMAGE utilizes education as the tool and the hope of deprived Mexican-American youth.

In a crowded small town high school auditorium in Seguin, Texas, young Mexican-American boys and girls listen to a successful doctor talk about the opportunities available in today's youth in the many health careers. In other classrooms throughout the school, other equally successful professionals and skilled men and women talk at length about their work to students. These students listen, impressed not only by what they hear, but by the fact that before them stands someone they can relate to, someone who can understand what they really feel and have experienced. For the first time in their lives, they are listening to a Mexican-American, someone like themselves, who has "made it."

After the formal talk is over, the speakers find themselves cornered by youths who have special questions that they want answered personally.

"It really surprises these kids to actually meet with someone from their own ethnic group who is a lawyer or a doctor. They know we exist somewhere, but they had never really met one of us. They probe us with questions about our personal background and get a big kick out of hearing us speak in their own Spanish colloquialism and relate stories about our 'bean and tortillas' days," says one of the IMAGE Career Days speakers, a prominent chemist. "I guess the best part about this is that the kids see that it's possible for them to become whatever they want to be."

IMAGE's "Career Day" conferences offer Mexican-American youth visible evidence that success is attainable for all who seriously strive for it.

These three incidents dramatically illustrate the issues which Involvement of Mexican-Americans in Gainful Endeavors, or IMAGE, has become deeply involved with. IMAGE today has chapters throughout Southwest Texas, New Mexico, and California. IMAGE's dynamic founder, Antonio (Tony) Calderon enthusiastically describes the philosophy of IMAGE in what he calls the IMAGE YEARN TO LEARN concept.

According to Tony, "When we turned our attention to the problems of Mexican-American youths and the alarmingly high dropout rate, we discovered that most student dropouts resulted from a combination of circumstances that were economical, cultural, and phychological in origin. These students are often characterized by a negative self-concept and a low-level of aspiration. Factors contributing to this situation include a lack of tutoring and counseling services in some school systems and/or a need for some students to secure part-time employment in order to supplement low family incomes." He cites these problems as the causes of the high incidence of Mexican-American high school dropouts and has made these problems the target of the YEARN TO LEARN program.

Fully aware of the tragic future of Mexican-American dropouts, Mr.

Calderon, through the programs in the YEARN TO LEARN concept, has proposed an innovative, yet realistic, solution by providing assistance and motivation to these young people. "Proper motivation determines success or failure and IMAGE, convinced that lack of motivation is a key factor in the tragic dropout rate among Mexican-Americans, emphasizes a good education as a basic prerequisite for responsible citizenship and for a successful entry into today's complicated society."

Image's Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP)

What happened to Joe Garcia when he walked into the IMAGE YEP office illustrates what the IMAGE YEARN TO LEARN concept is all about.

Joe had to fill out an information blank; somebody helped him. He didn't even have to ask for help—it was offered. Joe had never been very good at doing more than signing his name. He was asked to come back on Tuesday. He did. He met with the Director of the IMAGE branch and a group of 15 other young people.

Joe's group met for several days. They listened, they talked, they learned.

Every youth that visits an IMAGE YEARN TO LEARN center usually requires assistance in one of three problem areas. It may be that he needs a job to be able to stay in school, or he may need tutorial assistance to keep up with his school subjects. Or on a more basic level, he may have a very low opinion of himself, and therefore, his first need was for a positive outlook. By talking to the dropout, and by listening to what he had to say, the staff was able to ascertain what his reasons for failure were. "Counseling changes the attitude that nobody cares. By talking about concrete plans with these youths, they began to see that there is a future," according to the Director of the IMAGE Youth Entrepreneurship Program. "It dawns on a youth to ask himself, "Why should I steal a $2.00 hubcap against having a $5,000 job?" These kids used to think that no matter what they did in life, they were not going to be able to make it. They saw what the ads hold out as the good life—but they thought it wasn't meant for them. They thought that they would never make more than $1.40 or $1.70 an hour all their lives."

Joe and his group got jobs. Joe had never had an experience like this before. He was working at something he liked to do, getting paid a good wage, and most important, he was beginning to hope. Joe Garcia is just one example of IMAGE's solution to the problem of giving youthful dropouts an economic boost. What happened to Joe is happening to others like Joe in IMAGE centers throughout the Southwest. In San Antonio alone six IMAGE YEP corporations exist—and produce. The Youth Entrepreneurship Program is the part

of the IMAGE YEARN TO LEARN concept that deals with the problem of youth not having enough money to continue in school.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Program was first funded for $65,000.00 in the form of a combination grant by HEW and Model Cities, for the purpose of providing enterprising ventures in the form of miniature companies.

These self-perpetuating companies were created to channel delinquent and pre-delinquent youths' energies into positive and productive activities to (1) enable them to succeed as members of a society based on the free-enterprise system, and (2) deter their continued involvement in delinquent activities.

The Project originally developed four model miniature corporations or companies made up of twelve to twenty members each, between the ages of twelve and eighteen. Each group was assigned to a supervisor and was furnished with equipment, transportation, technical assistance, guidance, encouragement, and other support as needed. Each of these supports would enable the individual groups to achieve specific goals which would result in each participant being monetarily rewarded for his share in the corporate effort.

The project itself consisted primarily of the developing of youth entrepreneurs in the service, manufacturing and sales areas. The program is flexible enough to allow participating youth to play a major role in the planning and implementing of their small, money-making ventures. It also challenges the participants with real responsibilities. The participants will be purchasing items for the business ventures, preparing payrolls, depositing money in banks, etc. And, in addition, it encourages creativity from each participant.

The selection of the youths for participation in the program is based on the following criteria:

1. Must reside in the Model I Neighborhood Area.
2. Must be between the ages of twelve and eighteen years.
3. Must be from a low-income family.

Once it is determined that a youth is eligible to participate in the YEP program, the company supervisors (one for each company) and the membership of the particular companies the youth wishes to participate in, notify the new member to report for preliminary orientation and classroom training. The training curriculum is designed to include:

1. Concepts and funding sources of the YEP project
2. Operational procedures of the respective companies
   A. Type of business conducted
   B. Payroll procedures
   C. Youth participation
3. Performance duties and responsibilities

When Joe first filled out his application he was doing exactly what every other youth that visits an IMAGE YEP center does.

The application includes the necessary information to determine the eligibility of the applicant and also helps YEP officials determine

the applicant's actual needs for a job; taking into consideration family income, number of children in the family, father living at home, the applicant's juvenile history record, etc.

Each applicant is personally interviewed by the YEP interviewer after he files his application. At this time, the interviewer discusses the applicant's family background, school background, juvenile history record, job or employment interests, etc., to determine the applicant's eligibility, immediate needs, and his interests, to insure proper placement in youth business for further training.

After the interview, an evaluation is made of each applicant, taking into consideration, his application and the interview. The apolicant is then notified of the evaluation results by phone or letter. If he is accepted for training, he is notified when to report for orientation.

The orientation phase is the first time a trainee will receive pay for his services in the program. He receives one dollar and sixty cents (1.60) per hour for the five hour basic orientation program. The first phase of the orientation program, conducted by the Business Coordinator and the Business Manager is held each Saturday morning from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The trainee then receives an additional three hours of orientation before progressing into on-the-job training where the apprenticeship approach is utilized. This involves instruction in the fundamentals of the respective companies from professionals in the respective skill areas. The youths then become active participants, receiving on-the-job training in their respective companies, working, gaining experience, and sharing in company profits.

The apprenticeship training phase is the actual participation in the youth business under the supervision and control of a trained professional advisor.

"In the case of a Sales Apprentice, the young entrepreneur works on commission, and must produce before receiving compensation. He or she learns the product, utilizes sales techniques, personality, poise, and other human relations traits that have been learned," according to the Director of the Youth Entrepreneurship Program. He goes on to say, "If he is a House Painting Apprentice, an Auto Mechanic Apprentice, or a Food Service Apprentice, the young businessman's salary depends on the amount paid for the service, less the cost of supplies, divided by the number of hours worked by everyone involved, and multiplied by the number of hours that were worked. As apprentices, the youths gain valuable experience under the supervision of a trained professional who is responsible for the quality of the work performed by the young trainees. The job skills, work habits, and experience gained through the Youth Entrepreneurship Program puts the youth involved one step ahead of the high school graduate or non-graduate who has no skill, no experience, and who knows nothing about the employment world."

Each company is operated as a separate entity. The officers of each of the four companies are elected by their respective companies' membership according to the democratic process. These officers are responsible for signing payroll sheets, checks, and contracts. All docu-

ments are counter-signed by the Project Director. The officers also develop guidelines and policies that are to be followed by the members of the company.

The success of the program is due partly to the enthusiasm generated by the youth themselves. Typical comments are: "I have a better understanding of the importance of business in our society." "I discovered an interest in business as a career." "It gave me an opportunity to make decisions." On a more tangible front, a former Youth Enterpreneur said, "I got my first real job through the efforts of the YEP."

For the period beginning April 1, and ending September 1, 1971, a total of two hundred and ninety-two contracts worth a gross amount of over $13,000 were bid, awarded, and completed. The mode of payment to individuals involved in their respective company undertakings was calculated by taking the dollar amount of a contract less the dollar amount of supplies used less approximately 5% (of gross amount of contract) in the form of a Retained Earnings resulting in Gross Profits. The Gross Profits are divided by the total number of labor hours needed to complete the contract. The average wage per hour results. The number of hours worked by each individual member is then multiplied by the average hourly wage, which results in the gross pay per individual member.

In August, 1971, a total of $9,300 was paid out in the forms of salaries to the youths participating in the companies.

One interesting thing about the project is the cooperation with other agencies dealing with juveniles. Individuals are referred to the project from the State Welfare Agency, the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Office, the City of San Antonio Police Community Relations Bureau, Project Prevention, the YMCA's Youth Outreach, and various schools in the Model Neighborhood Area.

IMAGE's Youth Enterpreneurship Program becomes more and more of a success every year. Each time a new chapter is funded, plans are initiated immediately to set up youth corporations. Once one business is established and operational, another is begun, IMAGE's dream is for YEP to reach more and more disadvantaged young Mexican-Americans as a do-it-yourself training school for adventures in free enterprise and human dignity.

Image's Concern for Negative Self-Concepts Among Mexican-American Youth

Even more important than finding jobs for students that need an economic boost to stay in school is the need to get the kids to feel good about themselves.

When Juan Flores visited the IMAGE Chapter and became involved in the YEARN TO LEARN concept, his main problem was his low opinion of himself. Juan always had trouble in school, not only because of his frequent absences, but because the teachers seemed to make no effort to help him learn. As he continud to fail, he felt less motivated to continue, so consequently, he dropped out.

The literature reveals that the causes why pupils are early leavers are multiple and of great variety. It is apparent that in spite of the many reasons, dissatisfaction with the school continues to be the chief reason for withdrawal before graduation. A continuous experience with academic failure, a feeling of not belonging, and little encouragement from the teachers combine to force the dropout to seek success in some endeavor other than the school.

In the case of Mexican-American youth dropouts, the causes for the high incidence rate are similar to other youth, varying however in several important ways.

Mexican-American students like Juan labor under a negative self concept which hinders their aspiration for success in our modern day society. This statement is substantiated in a recent study of dropouts performed in a predominately (90%) Mexican-American school district, conducted by Dr. Idel Bruckman of St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Bruckman brings up the lack of motivation as a predominant factor in the dropout problem. She states: "Essentially, with regard to the comparison of dropouts and non-dropouts, the most important original contribution to the present study might be seen in the findings on aspirations. The child who drops out of school early is one who not only has achieved less, but also expressed a minimal vocational level as his expectancy in life."

The implications here are strong enough to consider this lack of

positive attitude on the part of the Mexican-American student as a major cause of failure to graduate.

"A negative self-image is a deterimental factor in the psychological make-up of any individual, regardless of his ethnic group. The recurrence of failure to graduate among Mexican-American dropouts and their children has created a vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment."

Perhaps the vital contributor to this dropout problem is the fact that the historical contributions of their ethnic groups are not reflected in history textbooks and, as a result, Mexican-Americans are not always aware of their true heritage and do not recognize any heroes in their culture. These Mexican-American students try unsuccessfully to identify with a culture which has looked upon them as being "culturally deprived," and which fails to accept their bilingual and bicultural way of life.

The perceptions that people in a child's educational environment have of that child, as well as the child's own perceptions of himself, maximally affects his ability to succeed or fail. Teachers' expectations for disadvantaged minority group children tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies. Teacher attitudes and resulting teaching behavior can alienate a child from school. Children often come to school with negative feelings about themselves. The first collision with school usually reinforces these feelings or creates new ones. Consistently poor performance in a school which is incompatible with his cultural and learning characteristics further deepens the negative perceptions that the child has of himself.

Sometimes the Mexican-American dropout comes from a home situation where his parents have not had a good education themselves. Dads are, therefore, unable to assist their youngsters in their studies. As a whole, most school districts do not make provisions for tutoring programs or remedial classes to help underachievers. Even if they could, the fact that the underachiever is unable to cope with the regular instructional program in school would impede the youth from wanting to go back to the same institution and try to improve his educational deficiencies.

Frequently, family tensions exist and all to often the father's job is one of the unskilled variety which does not permit a very high socio-economic level of existence. In the face of family need, many pupils are forced to leave school to work. In a "back to school" mass media campaign IMAGE conducted last summer over one-third of the students calling a "dropout-prevention" telephone number to express their problems pointed out the need for part-time work in order to earn extra money. Most of the youth reported that the small family income was not enough to properly maintain the large family and allow for the "luxury" of school fees new school clothing, etc. Even though a student may be a highly motivated and exceptional student, he may be unable to continue his education if he lacks funds.

The dangers inherent in the failure of youth to graduate and the creation of mass unemployment have been focused upon by Dr. James B. Conant, former President of Harvard University, who has studied

the problem intensively over the last few years. He refers to the problem as "the most dangerous social condition in America" and adds that it is a problem latent with "social dynamite."

The IMAGE YEARN TO LEARN concept was able to help Juan Flores because its program provides for a "cultural corner" where books, articles, and other items of information depict the positive side of Mexican-Americans and their contribution to our nation's development and its history.

"Personal and social development is dependent largely on a positive self image. All too often, the results of self-dislike and psychological negativity are made manifest in one form of anti-social behavior or another. It is this negativity that predisposes adolescents to strive for few or non-existent goals."

The dehumanizing factors of discrimination, of prejudice, of stereotyping, and of emasculation take their toll on many Mexican-American youth. For these individuals, self-realization becomes resignation to mediocrity. Paolo Freire and others describe this as the phenomenon of the "oppressed seeing himself through the eyes of the oppressor."

IMAGE precludes this self-negativism and addresses itself to those cultural factors contingent on social and personal development. Through its Culture Corner Centers, it performs the function of cultural advisor or advocate by supporting and initiating services and activities vital to the establishment of self-awareness and positivism. The Center staff helps to promote and devise student activities which emphasize the unique styles, needs, aspirations, and talents of the Mexican-American.

Career seminars are offered in which Mexican-American panelists discuss with the youth the vocational opportunities available in their particular fields. Relevance and veracity are augmented whenever possible by recruiting barrio born panelists. Flexibility is the keynote of the Cultural Centers, and whereas one Center offers a library and a collection of works of art or artifacts, another may offer facilities for plays, street theater, cultural research, or touring exhibits. The main objective of the Cultural Corner is to provide guidance and facilitate the inclusion of an intercultural focus in all of the Program activities.

The Culture Corner works to reduce many of the roadblocks to achievement for the Mexican-American. Pride replaces insecurity and acts as a catalyst for maximizing the minority youth's potential.

Image's Tutoring Program

Along with the Cultural Corner, IMAGE provides for a "tutoring service" wherein volunteer tutors provide additional help to under-achieving students. These tutors utilize the small group method and the one-to-one method of helping youngsters to "catch up" or "keep up" in their studies. Many of the Mexican-American youngsters have a "keep up" problem due primarily to language problems in the classroom. *Achievement testing among children in a predominately Mexican-American school district indicates that:*

1. *At the end of the third grade, the typical student is performing one full year below national norms.*
2. *At the end of the sixth grade, he is performing one and one-half years below national norms.*
3. *At the end of the seventh grade, he is performing two full years below national norms.*

Fortunately, area schools have begun to realize the impact which the bilingual approach to education has had and to better understand the problems of Mexican-American youth.

"We have created an interest in learning," says one of the center's directors. "The fact that the kids keep coming back is a good sign." Parents have expressed an appreciation for the tutoring programs as they feel that their youngsters are catching up in areas they are studying now, whereas before they felt they didn't have a chance. Better evaluation as to the effectiveness of the tutoring is accomplished at the end of the year when grades indicate whether progress has been made or not. Students are requested to provide information on grades received for the subjects being tutored.

In addition, most of the youth are counseled in either academic or non-academic matters, in groups or singly.

Image's Career Day Conferences

When the United States Commission on Civil Rights conducted its first hearings on the problems of Mexican-Americans, it directed most of its efforts to the educational problems. According to a report published by the Commission, in the Southwest, Mexican-Americans have on the average, about eight years of schooling, or four years less than Anglos, and two years less than non-whites. During the course of the hearings, Mexican-American dropout student witnesses stated that they had never been encouraged in school to continue their schooling and possibly pursue a college education. They were asked if Mexican-American professionals had ever addressed their classes and informed them of the benefits of a higher education and the answer was negative. The Commission asked them if this type of encouragement by successful Mexican-American professionals had been employed, would it have helped to motivate them to stay in school. The answer was yes. When questioned as to why, one of the students replied: "If someone from my own ethnic group had obtained a college education, that meant that I too had a chance."

The Career Day Session at Seguin, Texas, was an immense success for both the students and the speakers because it allowed both groups to come together and benefit from each other; the the students, of course, benefiting from the first-hand information given by the professionals, and the speakers benefiting by knowing that they were helping Mexican-American youngsters to aspire towards better jobs as skilled persons.

Since it was implemented in February, 1970, the IMAGE Speaker's Bureau has sponsored several "Career Days" activities in schools with representatives of over 25 different careers, making presentations and providing information on their respective careers. Career Days are coordinated through the national office by college students who work at IMAGE half-days as part of their college work/study program. "It's more like a full time job, calling people, making arrangements, interviewing the kids afterwards. It's a real job, but we've been very successful," one of the students says. "We are a small staff of workers, mostly volunteers, who want to help Mexican-American youth, and we carry a Career Day Conference from the beginning to the very end."

The Career Day Conference staff jobs entail scheduling keynote speakers for each of four general assemblies. In addition, they contact and request from 20 to 80 persons to speak on their respective occupations. Once initial telephone and personal contacts are made, a format for the audience has to be established. Interest sheets listing many types of careers are compiled and circulated among students of the conference school.

"These sheets give the staff a sampling, although not completely accurate, of whom to select as speakers for the classroom size meetings. These small meetings are, in fact, the heart of the program, wherein the students are able to discuss with a representative of his field the realities of a career," another volunteer adds. "At the end of the Conference, the students are asked to evaluate the speaker he or she heard. According to their evaluation sheets which are submitted, students indicate whether they enjoyed the Career Day or not."

IMAGE Career Day Conferences have enjoyed so much success that most school districts have made arrangements to incorporate the conference idea into a regularly occurring event. Response from not only the youth, but teachers, counselors, principals, and high administrative officials, has been enthusiastically in support of the IMAGE effort to attach relevance to the school curriculum and pride to the Mexican-American culture.

"IMAGE is proving that Mexican-American youth can make it out of the vicious cycle of poverty, ignorance, and the unskilled labor market. Its Yearn to Learn Program, through Career Day Conferences, is furnishing a solution to the problem of nonmotivation, a serious cause of youth dropouts and subsequent delinquency. If these youths can see a future, the bonds of failure can be broken. This is the premise of IMAGE'S efforts."

Background on Image, Inc.

"The meek may or may not inherit the earth, but the young certainly will. How are they going to cope with the explosive potentialities of the 20th Century?"

Focusing on the key psychological and sociological aspects of modern Mexican-American youth and their environment, IMAGE has analyzed the problems and needs of these youth today; the historical forces behind their discontent and the problems of work and career in an automated age. Bringing to bear an entirely new perspective, embodied in the Yearn to Learn concept, IMAGE is providing solutions by which young Mexican-American delinquent and non-delinquent youth can confront the transitions and issues which they are experiencing.

Going back to the illustrative examples of Joe Garcia and Juan Flores and the Career Day group, it becomes evident that IMAGE works as much as a deterrent agent as a reactive one. That is to say that IMAGE is able to foresee what future obstacles are ahead for troubled youth and works to eliminate these obstacles through its programs. A good example is its counseling program in conjunction with other programmatic facets, namely the Youth Entrepreneurship Program, the cultural programs, and the Career Orientation Conferences. People like Joe Garcia and Juan Flores gain much from the sensitivity encounters held in settings outside their normal environment, receiving help from volunteer professionals in counseling. These experiences help these youth and adults to understand each others problems better, as well as helping them deal with specific problems. The counseling program is aimed at helping the youth find personally gratifying and socially successful roles by removing the obstacles of negative labeling.

The Problems of Mexican-American High School Dropouts

IMAGE began as a small organization of civic leaders who wanted to do something for delinquent and pre-delinquent Mexican-American youth, notably the hundreds of youngsters in San Antonio who were dropping out of school every day. As they studied the problem of drop-

outs and the long range implications of such a problem, they discovered that:

"Statistics show that dropouts, because of an incomplete education, have high rates of job changes and unemployment and few skills for bargaining in the employment world. Interest in the matter of dropouts has been to a large extent motivated by the rapid change in technical knowledge. In the years to come, the most rapidly changing group of jobs will be professional and technical operations. Conversely, the unskilled jobs will become fewer, with the result that dropouts will have less and less opportunity to find positions commensurate with their preparation for work. The typical dropout is entirely unprepared for any occupation other than that of the unskilled variety and today's employer is usually demanding a high school diploma before considering a job applicant."

When the IMAGE Board of Directors investigated further the problems of these dropouts, they found out that the situation among the Mexican-American student population was tragic, to say the least. From information gathered from a report of the Governor's Committee on Public Education, they learned that this particular student population had the highest dropout percentage of any ethnic group in Texas. The complexity of this problem was further enhanced by other notably deficient situations. According to the United States Census figures:

1. The Mexican-American population has the lowest level of formal educational attainment in Texas.
2. The Texas educational system ranks 42nd nationally, when measured by the percentage of its young people who graduate from high school. This is a good indication that supplemental programs are needed.
3. The median educational level for Mexican-Americans in the early '70s was 6.2.
4. The ratio of Mexican-Americans completing from 1 to 4 years of high school is 16%; the ratio completing 1 to 4 years of college is 4.2%.

The Yearn to Learn Concept

So much for the problem; it existed and IMAGE was able to identify certain specific causes for the high incidence of recidivism among Mexican-American youth dropouts.

One such cause was the inability of the youngsters to purchase necessary school supplies, pay school fees, and purchase school clothing. Over *half* of the school population of Mexican-American youth come from homes with poverty level incomes. Although much has been written about the effects of poverty on the development of the individual, little has been done to change institutions to deal with those effects. American schools fail to take into account the effect of the absence of typical adults, particularly fathers, in these families. They fail to consider the concentration of adult energies on meeting the basic necessities of life, the relative absence of books, records, and other resources in the home, and the deprivational effects of inadequate housing, malnutrition, and poor health.

Poverty in itself is not usually viewed as a deterrent factor in keeping youth from achieving. The IMAGE founders realized this. But poverty, coupled with self-negativism can and does hinder the individual affected to such an extent that further progress becomes nearly impossible.

This general lack of pride in personal or ethnic achievements was seen as being ostensibly reinforced through prevailing curricular programs of typical American schools and the mainstream culture. IMAGE saw that traditional instructional programs did not reflect the cultural experiences of Mexican-American families. Stories and pictures in basic readers developed for typical middle-class Americans were oftentimes meaningless to Mexican-American children. In many instances, the instructional materials were more than irrelevant for the youth—they were insulting, degrading, and traumatizing. The detrimental effects of culturally incompatible instructional programs were compounded by school regulations and policies which further alienated minority group youth by producing role and value conflicts.

"When the problems of Mexican-American youth are viewed in the light of all of these circumstances, it isn't difficult to understand why they have problems staying in school," according to IMAGE. "From the very beginning we knew we had to make an effort to make educa-

tion the key for these youngsters, make it relevant for them, help them attain some financial security, and most important, we had to attach pride and motivation to the kids themselves, both as individuals and as part of a distinct ethnic group."

After trying many different approaches, some which were successes and some which were failures, Tony Calderon developed an idea which he named the Yearn to Learn Concept.

"I wanted a plan that would create individual motivation and also produce a desire for continued education. I also wanted to stimulate community participation in youth development activities. I believe I found the answers to my quest for a solution in the Yearn to Learn Concept."

To understand the concept, one must first realize that it is a concept incorporated into a programmatic framework of specialized programs which relate themselves to distinct areas of delinquent and non-delinquent problems. One project may provide for education aids to combat learning difficulties; that is, the IMAGE Tutoring Program where volunteer tutors work with high school youth to help them keep up or catch up with their class work.

Another project provides for employment aids through the Youth Entrepreneurship Program. By introducing Mexican-American youth to the exciting world of free enterprise, IMAGE is able to give deprived youth the financial security needed to continue their education and, at the same time, become productive members of society.

Calvin Coolidge once said, "The business of America is business." And what better way to inculcate the socio-economic and political premises of the mainstream culture than by utilizing established business practices for the advantage of minority youths? The concrete realities of commercial ventures are an invaluable proving ground for ability and determination. By orienting youth in the arts of entrepreneurship, IMAGE is laying the foundation for developing confident, capable leaders from former delinquents or dropouts. The Career Day Programs and "Cultural Corners" are IMAGE's answer to the challenge of non-motivation among youth and lack of pride in ethnic achievements.

Plans for the future are in the making and include more concentration on giving the IMAGE Yearn to Learn Concept a national scope.

"IMAGE is growing, and more and more providing realistic solutions to the problems of our youth," says an IMAGE Board Member.

The Image Organization

The Yearn to Learn Concept operates within IMAGE Chapters or Centers. A separate managing staff presides at each center, with overall program supervision retained by the Yearn to Learn administrative staff established in the IMAGE organization. At the top of the organization is a National Executive Director, who reviews the progress and programs of the Chapters and makes appropriate recommendations toward their successful operation. He also considers their role in the national structure's efforts in support of programs and funds for the organization. Subordinate to the National Executive Director, a Director of Field Operations has the responsibility of administering overall program directions and insuring the achievement of stated objectives. He is also charged with the task of promoting continuing program functions and supporting them by assisting the individual Centers in the development of new program concepts. He conducts periodic district meetings to coordinate all program efforts and to obtain information on specific program endeavors. He is also entrusted with fiscal administration.

At the Centers themselves, staffs consist of a director, a part-time secretary, and volunteer help. The Center Director is responsible for the effective development and management of his respective program. He also enlists community participation and explores all possible sources of local financial support to insure program continuation.

Although the administrative staff of IMAGE will govern over-all project functions, it is noted that each Center adapts its respective program to local needs and thus will be allotted all possible local autonomy in making program decisions not in conflict with overall project goals.

A Board of Directors is established for each Center to make policies concerning program action. All such decisions, however, shall comply with the By-Laws established under the IMAGE organization. These Boards shall consist of local citizens, church and business leaders, educators, youths, and various other individuals concerned with program goals.

Need for Yearn to Learn Concept

In 1972 there were about 100,000 out-of-school Mexican-American youths in the age bracket which the IMAGE "Yearn to Learn" program intends to help. More than half were males. In 1973 there will be 80,000 more youths reaching 16 than during the preceding year. With the influx of 16 to 20 year olds into the labor force during the years ahead there will be further increases in unemployment. Many unemployed youth will be school dropouts who have not completed a high school education or even an elementary school education; they will be inadequately prepared to secure and hold a job in our technological age.

A by-product of the increased dropout rate among these youth is the rise in delinquency, which has been on the increase during the past dozen years and rises proportionately much faster than the number of youths. The causes of youth delinquency are complex and intricate, and in the case of Mexican-Americans, additionally, compounded by cultural prejudices and negative self-perceptions.

While the "Yearn to Learn" program is aimed to combat the dropout problem and to provide Mexican-American youth between the ages of 16 to 22 with educational assistance, pride and motivational programs, and useful job opportunities, it also helps combat juvenile delinquency. It permits the administrators of the program discretionary powers in determining the qualifications for youths served. The program operates to squash the primary cause of recidivism; namely, the lack of concern for disadvantaged youth and their problems. Ostensibly, the approach forwarded by IMAGE DOES NOT DENY THE OCCURRENCE OF INDIVIDAUL PATHOLOGY, OR THAT SUCH CONDITIONS ARE SOMETIMES DIRECTLY IMPLICATED IN JUVENILE BEHAVIOR. What it does assert is that, in most such cases of Mexican-American youths, the problem is traceable in turn to the damaging experiences encountered by the young person as a member of the family, his peer group, the school, or of all three.

"IMAGE felt that a close relationship existed between social-economic problems, juvenile delinquency, and the school dropout rate. That, whereas much had been said about all of these problems, little if any effort had ever been exerted towards attempting to salvage

delinquent and pre-delinquent barrio youth by capitalizing on their naturally developed talents, drives, and ambitions. That if a vehicle could be found to channel the positive forces inherent in delinquent and pre-delinquent youth, from a negative to a positive area of endeavor, a giant step would be taken toward reducing many of the problems heretofore mentioned."

The "Yearn to Learn" Concept is a Comprehensive Program

The Yearn to Learn Program provides for four separate programs to take care of the different needs of Mexican-American dropouts. The tutoring program discourages lack of interest in school by strengthening proficiency among slower students and developing academic skills. Pride and motivational programs act as incentives to pursue higher goals in school and post-graduate careers. Dropouts are encouraged to resume school attendance while they perform useful jobs and earn an income.

This program goes far beyond the mere channeling of the existing drives of youth, it salvages young girls and boys who will become men and women, it has tremendous impact on the home and family life of the program participant, it offers a concrete example to the entire community and, above all, it offers a relief to the already taxed social, educational, and correctional institutions.

The Program Produces Results

The program provides sound on-the-job training in expanding jobs within the youth's own community. In a report compiled by a federal programs evaluator, it was noted that:

"The programs . . . (which) included educational service programs for dropout prevention and economic development programs to provide jobs and money making opportunities for youth, were able to accomplish the following:

868 youth were placed on part-time and full-time jobs with the local businessmen in the communities.

310 jobs were created through the various youth business ventures and youth businesses. These jobs ranged from the "on-going" type jobs in the Mission Ice Cream Parlor and the Harlingen Paint Contractor business to the many temporary jobs involved in the car wash, bar-b-que, gift wrapping, and weekend dance type projects.

Over $79,500 was earned by the youth in their business ventures and jobs during this period.

361 youth were tutored to help them with various school problems and to help them "keep up" and "stay in school." These are individual youth and many of them are tutored many times each week.

Over 800 youth participated in a Career Day program at Mission Junior High. This resulted in the local school administration approving the Career Day program as a part of the annual school program in the future. Harlingen has a Career Day scheduled. Alice is experiencing problems in convincing the school administration of the need for a Career Day program but progress is being made.

A total of 2,164 youth have received specific assistance of one type or another from IMAGE-HEW centers. This does not include general or informal assistance and counseling provided to hundreds of others.

The Program is a Sound Investment

The rehabilitation of human resources, particularly preparing youth for useful productive life, cannot be measured in terms of immediate economic outlays. The cases have to be discounted against the future productivity of the rehabilitated youth. Proponents of the program point out that the program will more than pay for itself in terms of a sound accounting basis. By emphasizing preventive measures, the program will save future vast punitive outlays. The cost of keeping ill-educated dropouts on welfare roles because of their ineligibility for suitable employment is immeasurably higher than the relatively low cost invested in offering youth self-development opportunities. Dr. Samuel M. Brownell stated that on purely economic grounds it would be a wise investment to spend $10,000 to rehabilitate a youth and to prevent an unemployed youth from drifting into unemployability. The program strengths lie in IMAGE's concrete and realistic solutions to the problems of youth dropouts. The program encourages youth to seek the personal rewards of the free enterprise system, tangible profits reinforces positive self concepts through presentations by success models in informative sessions on careers, and supplements their education by providing tutoring programs.

Image Today

Three particularly active projects have been chosen for commentary on IMAGE's efforts in the Rio Grande Valley. Mission, Harlingen, and Alice, Texas, are the sites where IMAGE Yearn to Learn Centers were recently evaluated as to progress and potential growth. The following excerpts point out the timeliness of the projects and the tremendous efforts exerted by the people of the projects themselves in attacking the realistic problems of the Valley Mexican-American youth.

Alice

The Alice IMAGE-HEW Program operates from its location in the Heritage Housing Development.

> There is a high delinquency rate in this area, and a potential for even greater problems with the pre-delinquent youth. Physical evidence exists showing drug and narcotics problems, school drop-out problems, and activity and potential towards juvenile delinquency.
>
> The IMAGE-HEW Program was funded, in Alice, on a budget designed for the development of a school dropout prevention program consisting of Speakers Bureau, Career Day Programs, and Tutoring Programs.

Several positive and innovative changes have occurred since the present Director assumed his position in October 1972. The program at present consists of the following:

> There is a tutoring program for youth in Alice, involving 50-100 youth per month in daily tutoring programs that provide the help necessary for them to "keep up" instead of "dropping out." Students in this program range from the 4th grade to the 12th grade, with most in the junior high group.
>
> The positive image of the Mexican-American is displayed constantly through the local news media. Weekly programs are on TV and radio as positive motivating forces to the young Mexican-American. Radio and TV stations in Corpus Christi and Alice are

most cooperative. The local newspaper has been cooperative most of the time.

A referral program has had some success in referring youth to other agencies, but very little success when it comes to finding jobs for youth, getting vocational training or rehabilitation, solving drug addiction problems, etc. Most of these services are not provided in Alice and youth must go to Corpus Christi for them. Economic conditions, transportation problems, and other personal obstacles prevent local youth participation. Most of the youth involved are between the ages of 16 and 20.

Many youth are in need of jobs but few jobs are available. When a job does become available there is usually a long line of applicants. The "hard core" youth have very little chance of getting the job. Urban Renewal and City programs do not hire these youth. Local businessmen refuse to hire them, usually because they have juvenile records or because of their physical appearance (long hair, etc.). The local Director is attempting to contract for lot cleaning jobs, etc., with the local urban renewal program, but to no avail so far. Other contractors have tractors and other equipment; therefore, they underbid the youth. Most of these youth are between the ages of 16 and 20 and over 50% are out of school. Many of the older youth influence younger youth in their thinking, habits, etc. An input of economic development funds is greatly needed in this community to provide needed jobs for these youth.

The youth have developed a weekend barbecue business. They sell tickets and pubilcize the event throughout the week and have the barbecue on the weekend. They have managed to raise some funds in this manner, with a promise of more in the future as the business develops.

The Alice IMAGE-HEW Program is doing a "quality" job. It is in an ideal location where youth naturally congregate to "rap" and look for something to do. Many of the IMAGE-HEW youth services are not measurable in quantitative analysis; such as the informal counselling sessions with known marijuana users to keep them from turning to the "hard stuff;" listening to a youth who may be experiencing emotional problems in school, at home, or elsewhere; soothing the ruffled feelings of a "hard core" youth who experiencing the frustrations of being turned down for job after job; etc.

The Director and the Secretary are both very dedicated and the program is well accepted by the youth of the community. The need is for additional funds to employ specialists to aid in Economic Development and dropout prevention programs. This will free the Director for administrative duties, community relations, coordination of the programs, development of an effective volunteer staff program, etc.

Harlingen

Harlingen IMAGE-HEW operates from its center at 504 West Van

Buren. The location is in an area conducive to daily youth "drop in" traffic. The Harlingen IMAGE-HEW Chapter maintains an excellent public image with the business and professional community, as well as with county and community leadership. The organization has the reputation of developing and maintaining successful and constructive programs for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, as well as developing pride and motivation among the Mexican-American youth in the community.

The professional and volunteer staff are highly motivated and dedicated to their duties. To them, this is not just a job that begins at a certain time and ends at a later time. If they must work longer hours to provide assistance and service to the youth of the community, they do it. This is one reason for the success of their program, and the impact it has on the community.

In combating juvenile delinquency in Harlingen, the local Director and her staff have developed the following program and activities:

An exhibit entitled "vaquero" is being exhibited at one of the major banks in Harlingen by the local IMAGE-HEW Chapter. This exhibit is on loan from the Institute of Texan Cultures and depicts the life of the Mexican cowboy and his impact on the ranching industry as we have known it for hundreds of years. Harlingen youth from all schools are being taken to view the exhibit as part of their art and history class programs.

Eighty-seven have been referred to other agencies or individuals for help with special or specific problems. Some of the agencies working with Harlingen IMAGE-HEW are: Texas Employment Commission, Senior Citizens Volunteer Programs, Youth Services Bureau, Texas State Technical Institute, Boy's Club of Harlingen, National Migrant Workers Program, Schools, Girl Scouts of America, NEDA, MHMR, HEP, Public Welfare, Job Corps, local churches, Juvenile Probation Officer, Local Business Colleges, OEO Programs, Family Welfare Clinic, Family Health Clinic, Multi-Service Center.

A Paint Contracting Business has recently been developed as a means of providing after school and Saturday work for older youth involved in the IMAGE-HEW program. These youth contract to paint houses, businesses, etc., in Harlingen. So far, they have more work than they can get to—primarily due to rainy conditions, etc.

Popcorn Concession, Tupperware Parties, Donut Selling Projects, Candle Making and Selling Projects, Stadium Cushion sales, Christmas Gift Wrapping Booth, and Car Washes have been other means and methods of involving youth in money making activities by Harlingen IMAGE-HEW. These projects have all been very successful. The Christmas wrapping booth alone grossed almost two thousand dollars.

Mission

Mission IMAGE-HEW operates at 710 Conway. The location is in

the barrio neighborhood and gets heavy daily "drop in" traffic from the youth of the neighborhood.

In combatting the juvenile delinquency problem in this community, the local Director and his staff have developed many successful programs and activities:

Weekly counseling sessions with young drug addicts—attempting to interest them in "constructive" mental expansion activities, such as yoga, etc., at the same time listening to them and recommending help, etc. At present, six youth, all "hard core addicts," are involved.

Twice weekly counseling with young thieves who are trying to break the habit.

An Ice Cream Parlor was recently opened as a Youth Entrepreneurship Project to provide job training job opportunities, and a place for other youth to spend their leisure time and money. Soft drinks, ice cream, etc., are served. There is a juke box, pin ball machines, etc. The ice cream parlor is attractively painted and furnished. This was done by hours and hours of hard work by the youth and adult sponsor, plus a one thousand dollar investment. The business is netting between three and four hundred dollars per month at present. Plans are to include additional food and drink concessions in the future. Five radio stations are providing radio announcements three times a day for this project at no cost.

A Career Day program was recently held at Mission Jr. High. Over 800 youth participated as 45 professional and business leaders explained the "mechanics" of their professions. The final evaluation component on the project is not yet complete, but the local school administration has already given the project a "vote of confidence" and is planning to include it as a part of the school's program of activities in the 1973-1974 school year.

The IMAGE-HEW Back to School Program is a comprehensive attempt to get all youth to go back to school after summer vacation. All local news media sources are utilized to tell the youth to call IMAGE if they have a problem that may keep them from attending school and then IMAGE helps them solve that problem. The Catholic Bishop, County Judge, and other local leaders proclaim, give sermons, etc., concerning going back to school. The problems the youth are having usually are economic, father unemployed, immigrant family, lack of clothes, no money for books, supplies, etc.

One of the big problems of the Chapter is trying to solve all the problems of the neighborhood—both youth and adult—as to the neighborhood people bring them to them. They spend their time in the programs and do not always keep adequate records that help them evaluate their programs and tell the story. It is unfortunate that more funds and manpower are not available to this dedicated organization.

Summary

Americans of Mexican heritage number close to seven million in the mainland United States. Most of these Spanish-speaking people face problems of social and economic deprivation and barriers to equal opportunity; some also affecting other minorities, some—like the language barrier—applying particularly to this group. These factors have the effect of deepening and prolonging the cultural isolation of the Mexican-American from the mainstream of the population. Mechanism for reducing the isolation—for communication across ethnic lines in both the job market and other aspects of economic and social life—have been generally inadequate. Lack of education and lack of knowledge of English are compounded obstacles to satisfactory, well paying employment for many Spanish-speaking. In many communities, ethnic prejudice and discrimination are additional obstacles. The problems of Mexican-Americans are of long standing, but have only recently become the focus of national attention and action.

IMAGE has stressed the need for new and intensified program action to open wider opportunities for this minority group, giving special priority status to the needs of Mexican-American youth. IMAGE is moving in a number of ways to attack the complex of obstacles impeding progress of Mexican-American youth. Its YEARN TO LEARN programs are supplying many solutions and needed assistance to help youth learn the skills to compete in today's modern society.

The IMAGE organization has accumulated knowledge of the language, customs, and outlook of the youth being served and expertise in meeting their needs. Major emphasis has been to promote a positive and progressive direction. The largely bilingual staff gives needed training and financial assistance along with a comprehensive counseling program.

IMAGE is expanding to serve more communities and increasing the value of its YEARN TO LEARN concept. This expansion has been helped by a recent refunding by the Department of Health Education and Welfare and a willingness on the part of many states and local officials to develop new ways of dealing with delinquent and predelinquent Mexican-American youth.

The success of the Youth Entrepreneurship Program is helping to

spread the YEARN TO LEARN concept as operated by IMAGE. More communities are becoming receptive to the idea of free enterprise ventures and local economic development projects operated by youth. The gains are coming slowly, but they are coming. The communities themselves are becoming aware not only of youth needs, but of solutions to those needs.

To meet the problems of Mexican-American youth in Texas, experience has shown that there must be an agency willing to assist youth in their efforts to break free from the vicious cycle of poverty and ignorance. In Texas and other parts of the Southwest IMAGE is that agency.

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